

Document: Judge Moreland accused of obstructing investigations

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Reported by Nancy Amons

NASHVILLE, TN (WSMV) -

Davidson County General Sessions Judge Casey Moreland faces federal charges for obstructing criminal investigations, tampering with a witness, victim or an informant, and retaliating against a witness, victim or an informant, according to documents filed in U.S. District Court.

Additional Links

Moreland has been the focus of an ongoing [Channel 4 I-Team investigation](#).

Moreland was arrested by FBI agents at his sister's home on Tuesday morning. He later appeared in handcuffs before a magistrate to determine whether he would be released on bond.

"The allegations set forth in the indictment set forth egregious abuses of power by a judge sitting here in Nashville," said Acting U.S. Attorney Jack Smith at a press conference. "Such an abuse of power undermines the credibility of and destroys the public's trust in the court system and strikes at the very essence of our judicial branch of government. Public corruption remains one of the highest priorities of the U.S. Attorney's Office and the FBI and officials who engage in such behavior will always be thoroughly investigated and vigorously prosecuted."

Moreland will remain in custody in a Kentucky jail until Friday. There will be a more detailed probable cause hearing and detention hearing on that day.

"He's obviously in a state of shock," said Peter Strianse, Moreland's attorney. "He had the FBI show up at his home at 6 o'clock this morning. He never expected it. I think he is still reeling a bit from all of that."

READ THE COMPLAINT

According to the complaint, on Jan. 25, 2017, the FBI opened a criminal investigation into whether Moreland and others violated federal anti-corruption statutes, by soliciting, accepting and extorting things of value, including sexual favors and other things, from persons with whom he had close personal relationships, in return for performing official acts that benefited those persons and their associates.

EXHIBIT 4

The criminal complaint alleges that Moreland became aware of the FBI's investigation on Feb. 1, when agents attempted to interview him. By that time, local media outlets had reported alleged misconduct by Moreland, including having sexual relationships with individuals in exchange for judicial favors. These reports continued to appear in the news on a regular basis, with new allegations reported in several subsequent news reports that outlined Moreland's relationship with "Person 1." The complaint alleges that Moreland knew that Person 1 was a material witness in this investigation and that Person 1 had made statements implicating Moreland's criminal conduct.

The complaint further alleges that beginning on or about March 1, Moreland took steps to obstruct and interfere with the federal investigation by attempting to pay Person 1 to sign an affidavit recanting prior statements about Moreland. Specifically, the complaint alleges that Moreland met with a person identified as "CS-1" and devised a scheme to pay several thousand dollars to Person 1 in exchange for changing her statements about Moreland. Moreland also told CS-1 of his desire to have drugs planted on Person 1 and then orchestrate a traffic stop where the drugs would be found and Person 1 would be arrested and her credibility destroyed. Moreland later provided CS-1 with a partial tag number for Person 1's vehicle to further the scheme.

This scheme to obstruct the investigation continued and the complaint outlines actions Moreland took to conceal his involvement, including having CS-1 purchase a burner phone in a fictitious name, to be used by Moreland when contacting CS-1. The complaint also alleges that Moreland instructed CS-1 to use another person as an intermediary when dealing with Person 1.

The complaint also alleges that on March 11, Moreland gave CS-1 an affidavit, written as though Person 1 authored it. Moreland provided CS-1 with \$5,100 cash and took steps to insure that his fingerprints would not be on the affidavit. Moreland also told CS-1 to get Person 1 "liquored up real good" before mentioning the affidavit.

During subsequent conversations with Moreland later in the evening, CS-1 told Moreland that he had met with Person 1 and that she had flagged various portions of the affidavit that were inaccurate, but that she would agree to sign it "as-is" for an additional \$1,000. Moreland agreed, and provided CS-1 with an extra \$1,000 in cash later that evening.

Finally, the complaint alleges subsequent meetings and conversations between Moreland and CS-1, where further discussion of the affidavit and planning of the scheme to plant drugs on Person 1 occurred.

Person 1 is not identified in the complaint, but is believed to be Natalie Amos.

Amos told the I-Team she was afraid of this very thing and that she believed she was being set up and intimidated. She said she found pills on her apartment floor that weren't hers and a restaurant menu in her bed sheets.

"I think somebody's been in my apartment where I currently live," Amos said. "So I'm like, yeah, I get it. I see your takeout menu in my bed, where I just was, thank you. I see your pills. So yeah, I'm scared, absolutely."

"I've told everyone, pretty much everyone that I know, if I go missing, same thing Leigh said, if something happens to me, they did it," Amos said.

Amos was referring to Leigh Terry, her former roommate who was found dead in her apartment last May. Police said she committed suicide after returning from a trip with Moreland and attorney Bryan Lewis last year.

If convicted, Moreland faces up to 35 years in prison.

Metro Council drafted a resolution weeks ago asking that Moreland resign. Since his arrest, some council members are asking that he step down immediately.

Councilwoman Jacobia Dowell originally drafted the resolution, but Councilman Jeremy Elrod is now putting added pressure on Moreland to resign.

Elrod said as long as Moreland is a sitting judge, he is concerned about Nashville's judicial system. He is also concerned prior cases that have gone before Moreland could now be jeopardized.

"I would hope anybody that's been done wrong by him that they would come forward," Elrod said. "I think the political structure in Nashville doesn't want to put up with this kind of thing anymore, particularly the good old boy network that protects friends, attorney friends like this anymore."

The resolution is set to be discussed at next week's Metro Council meeting.

Mayor Megan Barry issued this statement on the arrest:

"Nashville deserves to have absolute trust in our judiciary, and Casey Moreland, based upon the allegations in the federal complaint, seems to have clearly violated that trust. Like all Americans, Judge Moreland deserves the chance to defend himself in court. However, resigning his position now would seem to be in the best interest of the Nashvillians who depend upon the integrity of our General Sessions Court judges to rule in a fair and unbiased manner."

The Board of Judicial Conduct issued the following statement:

"The Board of Judicial Conduct is aware of the allegations in the complaint released today, filed with federal authorities against General Sessions Judge Casey Moreland.

The Board will be meeting to discuss their options, in accordance with the Rules of Practice and Procedure of the Board of Judicial Conduct and T.C.A. 17-5-301. "